

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session (with video)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, and the Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health), Mr Howard Chan, met the media today (April 1). Following is the transcript of remarks made by Professor Chan:

Reporter: Why are the three premises including beauty salons and message houses are allowed to remain open, especially when there is beauty salon staff has come down with the virus today? The second question, is it a bit rush because the announcement did not come until 17:56 and the premises only has four minutes to close. Why did the arrangement not announce before gazetted? Thirdly, at 3pm we knew that the Gazette said the arrangement would take effect from 3pm. The Government clarified that the arrangement would not come effective until 6pm. That's a bit confusing to the public especially the practitioners. Could you explain why would that be the case?

Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your question. First of all, I think this is an emergency regulation. This morning, the regulation was discussed at the Executive Council meeting with the Chief Executive and decided that we are going along with this direction. Why it is 3pm and also 6pm, it is in fact something technical. Probably my colleague, Deputy Secretary Howard, can explain a little bit more. At 3pm, we have to publish the Gazette so as to provide the Secretary for Food and Health with the authority to do it. This is step one. Step two, then we decided the time to have this regulation and also directions to become effective. That is 6pm. As I have said, it is of course time critical given this is an emergency regulation and we are in a public health emergency. Therefore, on one hand we want to start as soon as possible. On the other hand, we also understand that, practicably given such short time, these premises might have difficulties or very rush in terms of the closure or preparation. So in the beginning, in terms of enforcement, we would provide advice. The enforcement colleagues will obviously take into consideration these factors.

Reporter: Why are beauty salons not required to close?

Secretary for Food and Health: In deciding which are the premises that we are going to close temporarily for 14 days, first of all we look into the risks, so it is risk-based. I mentioned earlier that there are all these premises whereby there are activities involving more gathering opportunities. I think these are high risks. Therefore we choose to have closure of these premises. We would also look into the confirmed cases and also all the clusters. Those are some of the information that we are relying on. This time we have added three types of premises, and beauty parlours are one of them because we think they also have some risks. At this point in time, we give directions in the infection control measures, such as taking temperature before entering the premises, wearing masks all the time wherever possible and also having hand sanitizers so as to maintain hand hygiene. I think these measures are the initial steps. Of course, we will continue to monitor the situation, and

would not rule out the possibility of any further measures such as closure or other measures if the situation changes.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)